

PRESS RELEASE

House Armed Services Committee Bob Stump, Chairman

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN BOB STUMP

FULL COMMITTEE HEARING ON POSTURE OF U.S. CENTRAL COMMAND

Today, the committee meets to hear testimony regarding the posture of U.S. armed forces within the Central Command area of responsibility.

Some of the most serious threats to the United States and indeed the world are located within the Central Command area of operations. For example, Iran continues to actively support international terrorism and is acquiring advanced weapons and nuclear technology from Russia. Pakistan and India are engaged in a dangerous and unpredictable nuclear arms race. And Iraq continues to threaten the region with its aggressive military posture and pursuit of weapons of mass destruction.

By all accounts, the U.S. policy toward Iraq that was inherited from the previous Administration is under review by the Bush Administration. Appropriately, our witness today has been involved in portions of the review related to his area of operations. The committee eagerly awaits the outcome of the Administration's review, and looks forward to learning what viable alternatives to the current policy make sense and will advance our strategic interests in the region.

The Commander-in-Chief of Central Command must contend not only with Iraq but also with other threats in the region. More than 18,000 soldiers, sailors, airmen, Marines, and Coast Guardsmen are involved daily in Central Command operations and training. The threats to U.S. interests are real and so are the risks to our forces in theater. The last three major terrorist attacks on U.S. military personnel, as well as the bombing of the American Embassy in Kenya, all took place in the Central Command region. The attack on the USS Cole last October was only the latest reminder of the price of securing the peace in this volatile area.

As the new Administration reviews its policy toward the region, it is timely that this committee focus on the current state of events and understand the impact of ongoing operations upon our armed forces within Central Command.

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